

FCC Project Proposal: Support Community Reinvestment in Harvey

APPROVED BY FCC GOVERNING BOARD 10/6/20

Overview

FCC has a rich history of philanthropy. In past decades, we:

- Gave housing and support to two refugee families
- Gave significant financial and volunteer support to a church in Chicago Heights
- Used a tithe from our Project Sacred Space renovation to support reconstruction of Mt. Nebo Bible Baptist Church post Hurricane Katrina
- Continue to donate project and operating funds to area agencies
- Continue to donate time and treasure to seasonal drives, one-time projects, and emergency or social investments locally, regionally, and internationally.

Today, we are proposing to launch a long-term, multi-faceted relationship with a cohort of entities committed to community reinvestment in Harvey. Our initial partnership will be with NeighborScapes, a 501(c)3 entity led by FCC-member Jay Readey, which was incorporated in 2008, received support from FCC in 2009, and has been operating a similar mission in the Englewood neighborhood in Chicago since 2014.

With support from a bank specializing in affordable housing loans, the Harvey Economic Development office, and grantors, NeighborScapes will acquire and repair abandoned houses. “Community Building Fellows” (CBFs) will be placed in the houses at below-market rents, in exchange for 10+ hours of community investment per month per fellow. See neighborscapes.org. This investment is consonant with a larger reinvestment vision in development by both the City of Harvey and the Ingalls Hospital University of Chicago Medicine and Ingalls Development Foundation. Lois Glasgow, an FCC member serves on the Ingalls Development Foundation Board.

By partnering with this project, FCC has an opportunity to develop long term collaborative relationships with the people of Harvey and with the other churches, agencies and funders expected to become involved in this endeavor. Potential engagement opportunities include house repair, facilitating CBF recruitment, CBF project support (such as park clean-up, charity drives, neighborhood beautification efforts), mentoring, financial donations, and collaborative work with other agencies. NeighborScapes projects are overseen by a locally-established community board; thus, this project allows FCC to support rather than supplant local leadership.

Why this particular project?

No one community feature enables a community to thrive; education, jobs, transportation, spiritual communities, health care, housing, nutritious food, resident volunteer engagement, healthy environments, public spaces, and access to other amenities all work together to create successful communities. Consequently, community interventions are now seen to require multi-disciplinary strategies¹, eventually done at scale, to produce the desired impact.

At the regional level, there is a large-scale, well-funded and politically well-supported effort to create job-creating engines in the south suburbs, led by the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative (<https://www.ssegi.com>) and the Southland Development Authority (<https://www.ssegi.com/about-sda>). These are highly technical efforts that don't involve church participation. There are a number of social agencies in the south suburbs tackling specific challenges (such as housing, hunger, domestic violence), but there do not appear to be any integrated, geographically-targeted, multi-disciplinary initiatives already under way. Because of other independent Harvey redevelopment initiatives also in progress (such as that planned by the Ingalls Development Foundation and the University of Chicago Medicine Ingalls

¹ Duke, Elizabeth A., Building Sustainable Communities, Investing in What Works for America's Communities, Essays on People, Place & Purpose, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and Low Income Investment Fund ©2012, page 2.

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Hospital, as well as the City of Harvey itself) this Harvey initiative has the potential to become an integrated, localized, multi-disciplinary effort.

Secondly, our commitment to dismantle racism requires us to be intentional about redressing the impact of white disinvestment and to engage in multi-racial, collaborative relationships. Such relationships allow for the fullest flowering of our collective potential, and, for those of us living more segregated lives, open up larger possibilities of vision, identity, learning, and connection.

Finally, many in our own region once lived in Harvey or have family history there, making it likely that a sense of personal connection to this project will entice others in our community to join us in this effort. Jay Readey and NeighborScapes are excited about the prospect of people native to Harvey and other “friends of Harvey” helping to drive reinvestment in Harvey.

FCC Project Governance

For projects of this size, we have typically appointed one person to see the project through from beginning to end, reporting periodically to the Governing Board. That approach assured consistency and accountability through the life of the project, despite annual changes in the composition of FCC’s governance.

However, we are envisioning that this project will grow organically and may evolve to fundamentally change the way we participate in community regeneration. While we still expect to support our long-standing agency partnerships and to respond to emergent needs, this project has the potential to become the primary means of community investment, engaging many of us at different phases, drawing us into deeper relationship with our community, and inviting us into synergistic investments of time, talent and treasure with a variety of potential partners, opportunities we can barely see at this early stage.

Therefore, we believe that this project needs to be embedded more deeply in the regular structure of the church, with the overarching relationship held by the Board and church staff, while the operating needs of the engagement are managed primarily through the Board of Faith in Action.

Key Project Elements

- NeighborScapes, 501(c)3 dedicated to community regeneration, through local partnerships, led by attorney and church member Jay Readey. See <https://www.neighborscapes.org>.
- Innovation Houses. The redeveloped homes to be occupied by groups of Community Building Fellows (CBFs). See website above for current examples in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood.
- Pedcor Companies, an affordable housing development company, with 22,000 units across the country. CEO Bruce Cordingly. See <https://www.pedcormanagement.com>.
- United Fidelity bank, a subsidiary of Pedcor, that has two branches in Illinois, uses its deposits to finance affordable housing, and is the primary lender and equity investor in NeighborScapes projects. United Fidelity partially supports Jay’s affordable housing work, enabling his leadership of this project. See <https://www.unitedfidelity.com>. A former leader of United Fidelity, Dennis Irvin, is a Harvey native and remains active in Harvey development efforts.
- City of Harvey, Economic Development Office maintains a list of City-owned properties available for redevelopment. Director Nick Greifer and Jay Readey have toured the available properties and discussed potential paths forward.
- Redevelopment agreement with the City of Harvey: the process by which NeighborScapes acquires the properties for redevelopment. NeighborScapes describes the project plan to the City Manager and Mayor, after which it goes before the City Council for vetting and approval.

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- Sustainable Communities Program of the Illinois Housing Development Authority, a grant opportunity with the Illinois Housing Development Authority; proposal to be jointly filed by the City of Harvey and NeighborScapes, to, among other things, reduce the cost of the buildings and support the hiring of a project coordinator.
- Project Coordinator, a staff person for NeighborScapes that manages details associated with buying, renovating, and maintaining properties, supporting the Community Board and the selection of Community Building Fellows, and supporting the integration of efforts of other community players, including FCC.

Possible FCC roles:

FCC members can:

- Help NeighborScapes find the people who can recruit the Harvey Community Advisory Board.
- Help publicize the “Community Building Fellow (CBF)” positions by distributing flyers to churches, civic organizations, community colleges and Governors State University. The Community Advisory Board will select the CBFs from among the candidates.
- Help clean up the properties and nearby lots.
- Help renovate the purchased homes to make ready for rental to the CBFs.
- Research ownership and tax status of nearby vacant properties.
- Once Community Building Fellows move into the Innovation Houses, there will be ongoing engagement opportunities to:
 - mentor CBFs,
 - help CBFs make the connections to community agencies where they can do (at least 10) service hours per month, and
 - help with service projects themselves, such as supporting CBF-led food or clothing drives, community events, and neighborhood-focused organizing or cleanups.

Innovation Houses hold weekly “house night” meetings where guests from FCC would make welcome listeners about CBF projects, and speakers about community empowerment and neighborhood change, financial independence, homeownership skills, and personal development.

FCC may also make financial gifts to support Harvey redevelopment efforts, but they will be considered separately on a project by project basis.

Projected Timeline

- October: IDPH SCP Grant proposal filing, community development agreement negotiations with the City of Harvey.
- November: Conveyance of initial properties and property renovation plan development.
- December – January: Begin home renovations.